THE TALE OF THE BLUEBIRD MINE

BY HAROLD BINDLOSS.

THE white peaks were fading into the darkening east, and the mist which rises at sunset rolled like steam among the pines, when Henry Jardine sat talking with Eva Tourmaine on a hillside of British Columbia outside her father's ranch. Tourmaine owned lands and cattle, as well as mining stock, and at first was not pleased when his only daughter, who might have made a brilliant match in Victoria, smiled upon Jardine. The latter had studied engineering theoretically before he left the old country, and after a mixed experience in the Canadian dominion had purchased a small holding on mortgage in that valley. Tourmaine hinted that it would take him ten years to clear it sufficiently to make a poor living, but Jardine said he did not intend to try. He expected there would be mineral developments presently. The rancher slowly changed his opinions when Jardine creditably executed contracts for building rude bridges and blowing rocks clear of new wagon roads, and finally agreed that when Jardine could accumulate $4,000 and build a decent house he might claim Eva, who would not go to him portionless.

"My daughter shall not wear herself down trying to do a man's work in the bush as her poor mother did. It's better to do without the good things than get them too late," he said, with a sigh. "So if you want her, use all the grit that's in you. You can't get much for nothing in this world, Harry."

Jardine had done his best, and as he leaned over the back of Eva's chair hard, and lean, and brown, but a handsome man and vigorous from the clean life of the woods withal, he looked back on the struggle as well as out across the valley. One snow peak still flamed crimson in the last glow from the west, but intensified by the song of the river the hush of the summer evening brooded heavily over the darkening earth below.

"What are you thinking of, Harry? You are quiet," said the girl, looking up at him from under long, dark lashes, while the light from an open window touched her winsome face, ripened into warm bloom by mountain wind and sun.

"I was thinking of the first day I saw you, and remembering how you hired me at the railway to pack in a box for you," answered Jardine, smiling, and Eva colored.

"Don't. That isn't kind," she said. "How was I to know, Harry? And you really looked so——"

"Like a wandering hobo. Well, that was what I was," interposed Jardine.

And this time Eva laughed as she answered:

"No. I was going to say—hungry."

"I was hungry often in those days," said Jardine, a little grimly. "I am sometimes tired now. Things have gone dead against me lately, but we have our legal improvements on the mine almost complete. There is no doubt about the richness of the ore, and the Vancouver folks will finance me as soon as I get the patent. Then——"

Eva blushed prettily and turned away her head. But she had inherited her father's shrewdness, and said: "It is a pity you did not take my advice instead of delaying the development work so long."

"We hardly thought the claim worth exploiting until that Vancouver broker came along and offered us $500 to clear out. That gave us a hint, for we guessed the old Kootenay miner who drilled for us knew him. As you know, it was shortly afterwards we found—what we did. I hadn't a chance to tell you that the broker fellow offered $2,000 recently. It's a close race to get the legal improvements in, but nobody about here would jump us."

"No," and Eva looked serious, "I don't think they would, but I would be afraid of that city man, Harry."

"I am afraid of waiting any longer for Eva Tourmaine," was Jardine's answer. "The mine will give me a fair start towards prosperity, and it would break my heart to lose it. We have been working night and day and only need to put in the timber ready to constitute sufficient improvement. In fact, I must stay with the work until I get the crown grant, and come back to claim you—victorious."

He straightened his tall frame wearily, and then, as he stooped to kiss her, Eva said: "You look worn, Harry. I shall count the hours until the work is done."

Jardine tramped back down the winding valley, blundering over fir roots and into thickets, for he had toiled with shovel and cross cut saw all the preceding night, and his eyes were heavy from want of sleep. This, perhaps, explained why he did not notice that a thicker vapor than the mist rolled up above the dark pines on a shoulder of a hill. The air was also heavy with the smell of burning, but bush fires were common at that season. At last, however, he halted with a shock of consternation, for the great trunks on the rise before him were silhouetted in ebony against a sea of flame, and then, forgetting his fatigue, he broke into a breathless run. A bush fire of the fiercest kind raged about the Bluebird mine.

When he reeled panting into the clearing where his camp had been tent and tool shed had gone, while heaps of glowing embers fanned into flame marked where the great hewn down trunks had lain in swaths. The timber had been intended for use in the mine. The forest crackled all around, streamers of flame flung themselves from resinous branch to branch, and red tongues of fire licked up to the topmost sprays of the giant cedars. The heat was that of a furnace, but Jardine pushed on through it until he found his grizzled partner standing blackened all over shaking his clinched fist at the blaze and choking out strange expletives.

"Are the sawn props safe?" he asked, hoarsely.

"Gone!" growled Miner Marston. "Every blame one of them. We're burnt out, ruined, busted. The drills are melting, and there's a jam of 200 foot hemlocks right over the adit. I lit out to meet Freighter Davis bringing the powder in, and when I came back the whole bush was blazing."

"It's all up," said Jardine, whose face turned a curious gray under the fitful glare as he sat down limply, mopping the sweat from his forehead, and for several minutes there was only the roar of the fire. Then, because he was a sanguine man who had faced disaster before, he caught at a faint hope, adding: "It's cruel hard luck. Still, none of the folks round here would be mean enough to jump us before we've straightened things up. Accidents will happen, and——"

"Accidents be blamed!" growled Marston. "This isn't an accident. Some of them thieves who gave out they were hunting timber rights have burnt us out, and the company man at Vancouver started them in. Can't you smell kerosene on this? And see here!"

Marston held out a half burnt rag and a couple of unused matches before he continued: "Storekeeper Pierre don't sell that kind. We use silent smellers here. Crown mining recorders stand like cast iron by the law, and says the law: If you've not put your legal improvements on your claim in time anybody can relocate it. Begin to catch on, eh? Bush fires are common, aren't they? And them scoundrels knowing it have burnt us out so we can't put through the improvements before they jump us."

Jardine said nothing for a space, only set his teeth and clinched his hard right hand, recognizing that a cunning enemy had outwitted him. He also knew that the poor man who fights an unscrupulous capitalist over a disputed claim generally goes under. But he was a stubborn man, who, dealing justly with others, clung grimly to his rights, and there was an ominous flash in his gray eyes when he answered at last:

"Then they shall fight for it. I'm not going to lie down while any man robs me, and if they want the claim they must take it—the best way they can. Start now for Vancouver, borrow $500 from our friends there, and pay it into crown offices as composition for work not done. Then get hold of Lawyer Elmore and stand by to strike the rascally broker for conspiracy."

"And what are you figuring to do?" asked Marston, and Jardine answered quietly:

"Stay here and stand all jumpers off the claim."

The elder man looked at the speaker approvingly, but he shook his head. "There's sand in you, but it won't work out that way, and the law's too strong to buck against," he said. "It's forty miles to the railway, and by the time I got there the Pacific express would be through. It's too late for the composition already. You're young and innocent, Harry, or I guess you'd know how the case would go if you started to bluff off with two matches mine riggers who could put down $10 for every cent we show."

"Then," said Jardine, hoarsely, "is there nothing we can do?"

"Not much, 'cept to sleep over it. Maybe we'll see light in the morning; we're badly played out now."

It sounded absurd counsel, but Marston was right, for suspense with hope is torture, while a beneficent providence decrees that definite disaster often brings with it a mental numbness which blunts the victim's senses. Therefore, when Jardine, who had mocked at the thought of sleep, rolled the thick blanket round him among a hemlock's roots he found the scent of cedars even more soothing than the boom of the river which seemed drifting him away to a peaceful region wherein claim jumpers were unknown. When he awoke golden sunlight touched the cold white peaks, dew glinted like diamonds on every cedar spray, and the world seemed fresh and beautiful until he remembered what he had to do; then all the brightness faded. Neither of the partners ate much breakfast, while, when the talk that followed it was finished, Jardine plodded moodily towards Tourmaine's ranch and found Eva under the veranda. The sunlight kissed her face into brighter color, heightened the shy pleasure in her eyes and the sparkle in her hair, and the man groaned inwardly. Then Eva started as she saw his face.

"You have had a misfortune with the mine?" she said.

"We have lost it. We are going to make a last stand, but all hope has gone!" said Jardine, huskily. Then the girl listened breathlessly to his hurried words until she clinched one hand as he concluded: "I shall stay until the curtain comes down and then go away to some place where a poor man has better chances than in this valley. How could I stay here to be a reproach to you?—and it may be years before I have a home to offer you. Some day I shall win the dollars, perhaps too late, but, meantime, after the loss over Fuller's dam, I am a hopelessly ruined man. Heaven knows how this hurts me, but I must do the right thing, and, Eva, can't you see?"

"What would you do if you won those dollars?" asked the girl, with a wave of color in her face.

"Come back, if it was from across the world, to Tourmaine's ranch," said the man, in a voice that was strained and hoarse.

"And find me waiting," said Eva, with a catch in her breath, "whether you come soon or late. It is perhaps well you should go, Harry, but when you return, with or without the dollars, it will make no difference. Two to make a bargain, sweetheart, and two to break it—and I hold you fast. There, you can let your exaggerated sense of honor rest. It is all decided. But promise, even if those unprincipled men rob you, you will use no violence."

"Rob me!" said Jardine presently. "Are they not robbing you?"

And Eva said, softly,

"Hush! Have you not forced me to speak plainly enough? You are rash and stubborn, Harry, but the men behind them are too strong for you. You must promise."

"I promise, unless they use force," said Jardine, reluctantly. "Heaven bless you, Eva, for your faith in me!" And presently, comforted, but still uncertain if he had acted justly, he rode back to camp on one of Tourmaine's best horses he had a reason for borrowing.

The partners held a counsel, and Jardine said: "Our time runs out at midnight, and Evans has promised to restake the claim for us. He would take his chances with the jumpers, and when we had fought the lawsuit step out again."

"Mighty poor chances!" said Marston. "They'll have all fixed ready—fast horse relay, if wanted, a locomotive, and so they'd beat our man to the recorder's easily. Lawsuit! They'll buy enough witnesses and bring them along to break us before we'd almost begun."

Jardine, answering nothing, stared across the valley. A swift, snow fed river came roaring down between the long banks of climbing pines, swung in a mad, white streaked whirling round a deep, rock walled pool, and then plunged with a muffled thunder into a great rift between the ranges. Eight leagues over the high pass on the further side the railway stretched back to civilization, but ford there was none, and the trail wound round several leagues further by a rude log bridge.

"The claim is recorded in your name; there is nothing to prevent me relocating it," he said; and Marston nodded.

"No. The fact that you found the money don't count. But what's the difference between you and the other fellows we could trust to?"

"Just this," said Jardine. "If I can record first the claim is mine, and I would take risks no money could tempt them to. I could get a long start by swimming the river."

"Have you gone mad?" asked Marston. "It is a flood, not a river, and no living man has ever swum it here."

"That is probably because no man has ever tried to," Jardine answered, quietly. "I'm tired of failing, and I'm tired of being poor. Besides, you ought to know my prize is worth any man staking his life for."

Further discussion followed, until Marston agreed that there was method in his comrade's madness, and walked out to meet the scattered neighbors who had promised to attend as witnesses, or allies in case of necessity. It was dusk when he returned with them, and found his partner carefully rubbing down Tourmaine's horse, a big, stanch beast of pedigree. Then, as the lingering darkness fell, Jardine lay down, to rest, but not to sleep. This time every nerve was strung up and the suspense intense. The neighbors and Marston sat smoking about a fire, and the red light which flickered athwart the charred trunks showed their faces were expectant until it paled as a broad, silver disk sailed up behind a shoulder of the range. The whole misty valley seemed to vibrate with the roar of the river, for the drainage of leagues of snow fields was pouring that way in mad hurry to the sea. Jardine, as he noticed the sidelong glances towards him, felt he could understand the feelings of a condemned felon the night before he played a leading part in the spectacle of a public execution. At last a thud of horse hoofs trembled through the woods, and there was a sound of wheels crunching over rock outcrop, also wild language, apparently, when they sank in the softer places.

"The jumpers are coming," said somebody.

Two men rode into the moonlight presently, leaving shadowy figurees about the wagon behind them, and Marston stood up, leaning on his rifle. "Get off our claim before we put you off," he said.

"Anything to oblige!" was the answer. "Don't want a fuss. It's yours for half an hour or so, and then we purpose to restake it for you. There are six of us, all certified miners, and quite ready to maintain our rights."

"Miners!" repeated Marston, with unutterable scorn. "A common thief's roustabouts, you mean. Anyway, you'll wait until the time's up, or we'll hurt one or two of you."

"We want to save you trouble," answered the other, with a grin. "The first man to get this record in will win, and we've an express service ready laid on. Do you hold anything to beat it?"

"Get off the claim," said Marston, sullenly.

Jardine rose as the others withdrew, carefully tightening the saddle girth, then took up four square pegs and a hammer, and stood quivering with suspense beside a man who held out a watch. Shortly his turn would come. The minutes passed slowly; the others whispered hoarsely about him until there were footsteps in the bush, and a strained voice said:

"Time! Pull the stakes up."

There was a rush for the first boundary post, but as Marston pulled one peg out Jardine drove another, marked "No. 1. Discovery," in. A scuffle took place at the next, but he was first again, and the remaining corners were staked simultaneously. Then, amid a derisive howling, he shouted:

"Bear witness, I, Henry Jardine, free miner, have legally relocated the Bluebird claim."

One man flung himself into the saddle, Jardine did the same, two leaped into the wagon, and, as with a quickening beat of hoofs and whirr of wheels the cavalcade swept recklessly down the trail, Marston's roar broke through the mocking cries of the rest and the ranchers' cheers: "Ride for your life, Harry. Good luck to you!"

For a space friend and foe rode level, muzzle to muzzle, and tail to tail, dropping the jolting wagon behind; then Jardine, driving his beast at a screen of bracken, vanished among the pines, leaving his rivals bewildered.

"I figured he'd have made a better race for it," said one.

It was a steep slope to the river, matted with salmon berry, slippery with shale; but he went down it at a gallop, swaying low in the saddle to clear odd branches drooping between the great columnar trunks. Then he was out on the shingle under the moon with the flood roaring past him towards the pool, and the snorting beast went in with a plunge, as he drove the red spurs home. Jardine, who cleared his feet from the stirrups, slipped from the saddle when the battering hoofs lost their grip on the stone, loosened the bridle, and twined one hand in the mane, shifted it to the saddle, and saw nothing but frothing ridges while he trusted the brute's instinct to take it safe across.

Whether he swam or was merely towed he was never certain, but at least the water supported him, and the horse, which was used to shallower rivers, managed the steering, though now and then when they swung together across a smoother eddy he could see the dark pines sliding quickly up stream, and knew the big whirlpool lay ominously close below. But most of the time froth and water beat into his eyes, and the water was cold with the deathly chill of the glaciers; so at last it was with a gasp of fervent thankfulness that he heard sliding shingle rattle beneath the hoofs, and, dropping his own feet, he gripped the bridle and floundered shorewards waist deep in water. He was in the saddle next moment, crashing at headlong gallop through the harsh swamp grasses toward the forest, while, when he swept into a narrow, tunnel like trail, a half seen man dragged two horses clear of it, and a voice cried: "Well done, well done! Don't snare the beast, Jardine."

As he rushed past like a whirlwind a slender, white robed figure waved a hand to him, and the rider's chilled blood stirred within him, for it was Tourmaine's voice which encouraged him, and he spared neither the beast nor himself. All trails are bad in that region, but the one in question led over a hogbacked spur which no mounted man could pass in broad daylight, while every minute was precious. Jardine had calculated that he could just catch the Pacific express and reach Yale at least before his rivals made the long horseback journey to another mining recorder's station. They had taken it for granted no man could swim the river.

At last he dismounted, and, so he afterwards said, pulled the horse up almost vertically a mile, and once, when he tried to shove it, was badly kicked for his pains. Any one not used to them would find it difficult to negotiate most British Columbian passes without a rope and alpenstock; but they went up, over slippery outcrop and under climbing pines, through stunted juniper, and across broad belts of treacherous shale, until the spectral peaks now bare of timber loomed out above them in unearthly majesty, and Jardine wondered in the pale light of dawn how he was ever to get down into the valley. Neither did he remember how it was done, though once a branch flung him out of the saddle heavily, and the horse also rolled over, nearly crushing him, but at last smashing through thickets and floundering amid giant bracken, they gained a narrow trail and the beast responded gallantly to his last appeal.

The sunlight was clear on the valley, and low, shingled roofs rose up ahead, when a trail of white vapor that moved swiftly appeared round the shoulder of a hill, and Jardine, who dare show no mercy, drove the clotted spurs in again. The roofs rose higher and higher among the somber firs; twinkling metal and lines of glass showed beneath the advancing plume of smoke, and the rattle of flying wheels quivered across the pines, while the horse was blundering in its stride and the sweat stood beaded on the rider's forehead. But just as the great mountain locomotive came snorting into the little station they reeled, smoking, panting, whitened by lather and flecked red by dust, through the street of the wooden settlement, and Jardine, dropping from the saddle, flung the bridle into a startled lounger's hand.

"Ten dollars if you feed and take the beast back to Tourmaine of Red Cedar," he shouted.

His knees felt useless under him, but just as the cars lurched out he charged into the depot at a shambling run, and, clutching at a handrail, swung himself on to the platform of the last one, where he sat down, and for nearly a minute fancied he was choking.

"Is it a wager or a fortune you were riding for?" asked the conductor, grinning.

"Something worth more than a fortune," gasped Jardine.

The big express stopped some minutes at Yale, and Jardine, who learned that no mining official was present, had time to send a telegram to the crown offices at Vancouver before he went on there with the train. He hurried straight to the chief recorder's office when he reached the seaport city, and a soldierly looking gentleman stared with mild surprise as the haggard, disheveled, and travel stained miner was ushered in.

"Mr. Jardine, who wired us? A disputed claim, I presume?" he said. "I am ready to consider any particulars you can give me."

Jardine told the whole story unreservedly, and the listener made a few notes during the narrative. It was a fairly common story to him, for there is frequently litigation over a successful mine, and perhaps as often over those that fail. He had also a long experience of the miner's character, and, though he did not say so, fully believed Jardine.

"We shall doubtless hear from your rivals through the district recorder," he said, with a quiet smile. "You did well to come direct to me. But the application may require consideration, for while one's sympathy may be with the discoverers the law is stringent, and you were carelessly negligent in postponing legal developments. I will advise you later if we can grant a record."

For several days Jardine wandered about Vancouver in anxious suspense before he was informed that the authorities had registered him as discoverer of the claim, after which he called upon a certain honorable mine financier and a lawyer. There are honorable exploiters of mining ventures, though the opposite kind are perhaps more numerous. The one agreed to send an expert back with him and the latter said: "You haven't proof enough against your rivals, and it might be better to leave the—er, gentleman you mention alone. His cat's paws are hardly likely to ask an injunction against you now, and I could resist it successfully if they did."

Jardine returned to his partner exultant, and the expert in due time to Vancouver satisfied, one result of which was that a few days later Jardine laid a letter from the latter city before Tourmaine.

"It's a fair offer, and I intend accepting it," he said. "Unless that surveyor is far wrong the stock they offer me should provide a reasonable income, and there will be the director's fee. So I venture to claim the fulfillment of your promise."

"Build your house and you shall have it," said Tourmaine, smiling. "When you took my horse through the river I was willing to climb down. I figured you'd get the dollars some day, and most things you set your heart upon. O, yes, you have won her fairly, and I see her in the orchard. Eva, come in!"

Eva came in fresh and dainty, a cluster of red roses at the waist of her white dress, and a smile upon her face, until a flush of color surpassing that of the roses burnt in either cheek as she noticed the letter and the expression of the two men.

"We never back down on a bargain, and I suppose you haven't changed your mind since you asserted your right to choose for yourself?" said Tourmaine, with a twinkle in his eyes. "Well, then, I wish you good luck with him, and I guess he has shown himself the kind of man I can trust you to. You're starting fair, Eva, and it was only remembering what your poor mother went through made me try to do my best for you. Well, well, I'm getting an old man; but I think, maybe, she is pleased, too. And may heaven make the long trail you're beginning smooth for both of you."

IN THE GLACIER'S KEEPING . . . . . By Alan Mandeville.

I.

"A PRETTY tough climb, isn't it, Max?"

The speaker was a tall Englishman of perhaps 50, but looking as hard and tough and generally fit as most men of half his age.

"Yes, sir," said the guide, who stood before him at the inn door; "and we'll have to start early if we are to get back the same day."

Sir Robert Ballard turned and reëntered his room. From a desk he pulled out a sheet of paper, and, picking up a pen, sat down at a table and began a letter.

"My dear Harry," he wrote, "I'm afraid I have not been quite fair to you. Thinking over things again, I can see that your foolish pranks, which so much offended me, may have been—indeed, no doubt were—the results of sheer youthful high spirits. I am, therefore, again altering my will, and instead of my cousin, James Rennie, being my residuary legatee, you will find the bulk of my property will eventually come to you. I trust this will have been a lesson to you, and that you will grow up a man worthy of the trust I am reposing in you. Your affectionate uncle,

"ROBERT BALLARD."

Sir Robert sealed and stamped the letter, and then on a sheet of foolscap proceeded rapidly to redraft his will.

It seemed an easy enough matter, and took but few minutes. You would hardly have imagined the amount in question was something like £80,000.

The rapid pen ceased flying over the paper, and Sir Robert touched the bell.

"Call Max Schneider," he said to the waiter, "and you, too, come in. I want you to witness this signature for me."

He signed the document, the two men affixed their signatures, and then he folded it, placed it in an envelope, and slipped it into an inner pocket of his Norfolk jacket.

"What time do we start tomorrow, Max?" he asked.

"Not later than half-past 3, sir," answered the guide.

"Very well, then. I shall go to bed at once, and I suppose you'll do the same."

And twenty minutes later he was sleeping like a boy.

II.

"Great luck having such lovely weather—eh, Max?"

"Lovely indeed, Sir Robert; but pray don't say anything about it till we're clear of the ice. It's the worst of bad luck, sir."

Sir Robert laughed—the laugh of a strong man who is thoroughly pleased with himself.

Indeed he had reason to be pleased. Few men had ever climbed the beetling cliffs of the Aiguille Vert at all. Fewer still could boast of having accomplished the feat within the hours of a single day.

Half an hour later they reached the edge of the ice. The sun had now set, and the air, chill with approaching night, was no longer clear as it had been. Pale wreaths of smoky mist hung in light bands, which seemed to shift and change kaleidoscopically, though no breeze was felt.

Still roped together, as they had been during the entire climb, they crossed the moraine and started steadily tramping across the rough ice, whose surface was broken by a hundred deep rifts and lumpy, yawning crevasses.

The fog closed and fell thicker and thicker.

Some three hours later that night one of the guides burst into the kitchen of the Montvert inn.

His face was white and drawn, and he was almost speechless with excitement, misery, and fatigue.

At last he managed to gasp out his piteous story—how they had missed their way in the fog; how he had heard a sharp cry of warning from Max, who was leading the party; how next he had been jerked off his feet by a tremendous pull at the rope round his waist; and how he had desperately saved himself by driving his alpenstock into the ice. Next thing he knew he was alone—alone on the edge of a giant crevasse, whose misty depths yawned silent as a grave.

The instant they understood him a rescue party was formed, under the guidance of Herman, the innkeeper.

All night the devoted men worked, and most of next day. But it was useless. The glacier does not easily give up its prey.

III.

A big, broad shouldered, good looking young fellow of about eight-and-twenty was sitting in a dingy little room in Bloomsbury, answering a letter he had just received.

Harry Ballard had been looking out for a chance of accompanying a reading party abroad during the long vacation, and by good luck an even better billet had come his way. An old friend of his father—a Mr. Ffolkes—had written to him to engage his services as tutor and general bear leader to his son, young Everard Ffolkes, during a forthcoming Swiss tour.

He had always wanted to get abroad, and now the chance had fallen his way he was resolved to make the most of it. Young Everard, his pupil, was a thoroughly nice lad, and the whole expedition seemed to partake more of the nature of a holiday than serious work. The two trudged afoot through lovely valleys, up turf clad slopes, over rockbound, magnificent passes, drinking in the clear air and enjoying themselves rather like two schoolboys than a tutor and his pupil.

Everard wanted to climb a mountain. Harry discouraged the idea. He told the boy of the fate of his uncle, Sir Robert Ballard.

"Yes, I remember hearing of that when I was quite small," answered Everard sympathetically. "Were the bodies ever recovered?"

"No, never," said Harry, "and probably never will be."

They walked in silence a little way. Then Harry said:

"Do you know, Everard, I should like to see the place. Suppose we go up to Montvert? We can do it in two days from Chamounix. Your father put no restrictions on our movements."

"Then let's go," replied the boy, keenly.

Montvert had become quite a fashionable resort within the last few years. The old inn had been much enlarged. It boasted all sorts of modern improvements—among them a drawing room, a band, and a visitors' book.

Harry was studying the letter when he was startled by the names, "Mr. James Rennie and Miss Rennie and maid, Glasgow."

"My cousin, by Jove!" he muttered.

He had seen nothing of them for years—not since Mr. Rennie had come in for all Sir Robert's money. The daughter, Muriel, he had never seen. James Rennie he knew by repute as a hard and canny Scotchman; and here they were staying at the same hotel.

They met that evening in the drawing room.

"And this is my daughter, Muriel," Rennie said.

Harry looked up, and saw a soft dot of a girl in a black evening gown, who gave him a warm, impulsive handshake.

Somehow, Harry and his charge staid on at Montvert for a whole fortnight.

Harry was a new man. The inevitable was happening.

Then the Rennies gave a picnic. It turned out a brilliant, sunny day, and it was decided to go up the valley to a wood near the lower end of the Aiguille Vert glacier. It was at this picnic it for the first time struck Mr. Rennie that Harry was a trifle more attentive to Muriel than there was any occasion for. He did not say anything, but he made up his mind to two things: First, to watch the young couple pretty carefuly that day; secondly, to leave Montvert tomorrow.

Harry and Muriel slipped off amongst the trees, and soon found themselves quite alone. They strolled down to where, from under its arch of muddy ice, the glacier river started on its foamy career, and seated themselves near by on a great mossy stone under a pine tree. The blazing sun made the shade most welcome, and the two sat there quietly drinking in the warm scent of the woods.

"I'm afraid our holiday will soon be over," she said. "We have to be home by the 1st of October."

Harry experienced a curious shock. With extraordinary suddenness he realized what life would be without Muriel.

"Muriel," he said, quickly and earnestly, "Muriel, will you care?"

Apparently she did, for when, five minutes later, an interested spectator walked quietly up behind them over the carpet of noiseless pine needles, he saw a sight that made his smooth face wrinkle with rage.

The two cousins were sitting closer together than strict cousinship altogether entailed, and Muriel's head was leaning on Harry's shoulder.

James Rennie lost his temper.

"You sneaking young scoundrel!" he said, with a sudden emphasis that made the lovers jump to their feet.

"I beg your pardon, sir!" said Harry, quietly. There was a dangerous gleam in his eye. "You were saying——"

"That you are a scheming fortune hunter. Your uncle cut you off, and now you think to regain the money in a low, underhand way by marrying my daughter!"

Crash! A sharp, rending sound, followed by a heavy fall, made all three jump back.

A great piece of ice, loosened by the heat, had fallen away from the glacier end, and something else, too—something dark—had slipped from the broken mass and lay on the débris below.

For a moment no one moved.

Then Harry stepped forward and stood by the fallen figure. The others followed. It was the body of a man. He was dressed in rough tweeds, and when they turned him over his upturned face had a quiet, peaceful expression. He might have died an hour ago.

Instinctively the two men removed their hats. Then Harry looked at Mr. Rennie.

"You know who it is?" he said.

"Yes, it's Sir Robert," he answered in a low voice.

They picked the body up and lifted it into the shade of the pines. As they did so a folded paper fell from the torn jacket.

* * * * *

That evening Harry met Muriel in the hotel garden.

"Your father has told you what it was we found?" he said.

"Yes, dear," she answered. "And he told me, too, about your suggestion. Harry, you are generous, and, do you know, father appreciates it."

"I'm glad he doesn't think badly of me any longer, darling," said Harry. "But, you know, we shall be rich on half the money, shan't we?"

Muriel's answer quite satisfied him.